DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 683 EA 031 395

TITLE	Leadership for Student Learning: Recognizing the State's Role in Public Education. School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative: A Report of the Task Force on State Leadership.
INSTITUTION	Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; Carnegie Corp. of New York, NY.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.; UPS Foundation, Inc., Greenwich, CT.; Metropolitan Life Foundation.
ISBN	ISBN-0-937846-16-3
PUB DATE	2001-05-00
NOTE	34p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-822-8405; Fax: 202-872-4050. For full text: http://www.iel.org.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Government School Relationship; *Leadership Responsibility; *Public Schools; *State Action; State Aid; State Programs; State Regulation; *State School District Relationship; State Standards

ABSTRACT

Historically states are seen as more comfortable with narrowly focused rules, regulation, and monitoring responsibilities than with broad change. Currently states face revolutionary new arrangements for financing education, overseeing federal commitments, and providing fair and meaningful standards for educational performance. The major educational policy challenges of improving teaching and learning, implementing systemic reform, narrowing achievement gaps, and promoting equity through finance equalization are not issues that lend themselves to quick and tidy solutions. The capacity to deal with these issues must come from governors, chief state school officers, state agencies, legislatures, and state education boards. No single solution will be applicable to all states. The Task Force on State Leadership identifies additional concerns. Archaic statutes, convoluted arrangements for financing education, and state-level territoriality combine with competition among legislatures, state school boards, and permanent bureaucracies to create confusion. Governors, business interests, lobbies, the federal government, and mass media also assert their concerns. The task force describes the primary components of the stare educational policymaking apparatus, outlines some of the challenges and issues confronting those components, and offers guidance for increasing the capacity of states to provide leadership for student learning. (Contains 24 references.) (RKJ)

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Recognizing the State's Role In Public Education

School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative
A Report of the Task Force on State Leadership
May 2001

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FUNDERS

This publication was made possible by grants from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education, the Ford Foundation, the UPS Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Metropolitan Life Foundation. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

ABOUT IEL

For more than thirty-five years, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)—a non-profit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C.—has worked to achieve better results for children and youth. At the heart of our effectiveness is our unique ability to bring people together to identify and resolve issues across policy, program, and sector boundaries. As a natural outgrowth of our work, we have created and continue to nurture diverse networks across the country. Today, IEL is working to help individuals and institutions increase their capacity to work *together*. We are building and supporting a cadre of diverse leaders, strengthening the capacity of education and related systems, and informing the development and implementation of policies. Our efforts are focused through five programs of work: *Developing Leaders; Strengthening School-Family-Community Connections; Governing; Connecting and Improving Systems that Serve Children and Youth; Improving Preparation for Work.*

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Project staff would like to express gratitude for the input of George R. Kaplan, Martin J. Blank, Elizabeth L. Hale, and Hunter N. Moorman.

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ISBN 0-937846-16-3

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The Initiative

Of the myriad problems that have plagued American public education in recent years, few have resisted resolution more stubbornly than the complex of issues surrounding school leadership. While we sense that it is not working as well as it must, there has been no concerted national call to find out why—and to suggest how to improve it. Yet without richly qualified, dedicated, and enlightened state-of-the-art professional and political leadership, efforts to bring about genuine reform to enhance student learning are destined to suffer, possibly even to fail. Sadly, the American public and the nation's political leaders have yet to acknowledge the intrinsic seriousness of this matter.

This is the backdrop to the ***School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative***, a national effort led by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) to clarify the issues of school leadership, shepherd them into the spotlight of public policy, and debate where they belong. To prod the process, the Institute created four task forces of practitioners, business leaders, elected and appointed government officials, and others who met for a day and a half each in 2000 to probe one of four levels of school leadership—state, district, principal, and teacher—and examine ways to improve it as part of a massive, long-needed upgrading.

Not surprisingly, the task forces yielded differences in ideology and in how to approach the considerable dilemmas of leading public education. Had such differences not risen to the surface, the national debate about school leadership that the Initiative hopes to spark would be less spirited and robust than we expect it to be.

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Recognizing the State's Role In Public Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

POLITICS AND PLAYERS: STATUTORY DIVERSITY 3

- 50 Governors
- 7,400-Plus Legislators
- 508 State Board Members
- The Business Factor
- The Media Factor

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES: PIVOTAL PLAYERS 10

ISSUES AND PRIORITIES: AN EMERGING CONSENSUS 15

CHALLENGES AND CHARGES 17

- Preparing Better Leaders
- Bipartisanship and Coalitions
- On the Standards Express
- Free Advice for the Powerful

ELEVEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES 23

CONCLUDING COMMENTS 24

SPEAK UP 25

REFERENCES 26

Introduction

The message could hardly be clearer. In unambiguous language, the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says, "The powers not delegated to the States respectively, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." State constitutions, therefore, assign to each state the specific responsibility and legal authority for public education. But constitutional authority and responsibility may be the only absolute certainties about the state role in education as a new century begins.

The centrality of the state's role in closing the gap between educational reform and state educational capacity cannot be understated. It begins with leadership and the creation and promulgation of a state vision for education that will guide policy and decision-making at every level.

The current opportunities for state leadership may be unprecedented in our history. Education is undeniably the most salient domestic policy issue. The nation's political and business leaders have reached rare consensus in projecting the significance of school improvement at the local, state, and national levels. Indeed the stars are aligned for educational progress as perhaps never before. The individual states with their primary legal responsibilities must be the linchpins of the school improvement movement. They must be buttressed by greater public understanding of their central role and provided with the capacity to capitalize on the opportunities for leadership now available.

However, if there is one consistent theme characterizing state governance of education, it may be a marked lack of consistency. Historically written off as more comfortable with narrowly focused rules, regulations, and monitoring responsibilities than with broad-gauged change, state governments are caught in a crisis of leadership for which there are no easy remedies. Long-established ways of doing things are dying hard while blocking or inhibiting the adoption of new ones. Organizational relationships and mindsets that once guided policy in state capitals are weakening as powerful new players and issues enter the game and threaten to shatter its ground rules. And above all else, the content of the work that state-level authorities—governors, state agencies, legislatures, and state education boards—now perform is undergoing what may turn out to be lasting change.

Put differently, it's a challenging situation out there. While exceptions exist, today's state education leaders, both elected and appointed, are tackling some of the toughest assignments in the recent history of public education. Within the past decade, states have witnessed revolutionary new arrangements for financing education, overseeing federal commitments, and, looming portentously over the entire enterprise, demanding accountability for educational performance—the latter a sea change for systems of state and local governance that historically had been almost totally focused on "inputs" rather than "outputs."

Sadly, what makes the current situation so critical is that states have an historic opportunity to address the major educational policy challenges of 1) improving teaching and learning, 2) implementing systemic reform, 3) narrowing achievement gaps, and 4) promoting equity through finance equalization—and they may not be up to the task. These are not issues that lend themselves to quick and tidy solutions by organizational theorists, management experts, or "can do"-type corporate chiefs. For the most part, the capacity must come from within, from all state-level authorities—governors, chief state school officers, state agencies, legislatures, and state education boards. The dynamics of change and the legal authority to direct or permit it differ, often profoundly, from state to state, and no single solution is applicable, or sometimes even possible, for every state. But some "generic" forces are apparent in all or nearly all states. The Task Force on State Leadership devoted much of its time and energy to examining these forces and effective ways of dealing with them.

Common to most states (but especially the older ones east of the Mississippi) is the existence of a body of often archaic statutes, rules, regulations, laws, tax codes, and ossified operational practices, some of them dating back a century or more, that can work to impede rather than stimulate student learning. Typical of this underbrush are the frequently convoluted arrangements that determine how public education is to be financed. Exerting powerful pulls in different directions, too, are the unmatched pair of constitutional legitimacy and state-level territoriality on one hand and what IEL President Michael Usdan calls the "theology of localism" on the other. Territoriality manifests itself in nonstop, if publicly muted, competition among legislatures, state school boards, and permanent bureaucracies. Governors, business interests, lobbies, the federal government, and the mass media also pitch in to assert their particular interest in special issues—or in the whole package of state education policy. Localism, of course, is widely held to be the bedrock fact of life of the stewardship of public education, but adherence to it in state capitals is not nearly as clear-cut as municipal authorities and governance purists would wish.

As the nation's key units of educational policy and governance, states face a bulging menu of procedural and substantive issues to digest, organize, and somehow shape into high-quality services for schoolchildren. These are exceptionally difficult tasks for state educational apparatuses. Some are striving to modernize, but such seemingly obvious tasks as, for example, merging schools and higher education into a single educational system (one side of "articulation") appear to be beyond the ability of most as their responsibilities increase while their capacity does not.

Additional examples of the unique predicament of state governments in this era of standards-driven school reform can be found in all 50 capitals. As its discussions proceeded, it became clear that the Task Force felt as a group that the real challenge is how to organize state leadership and governance and develop the capacity to support teaching and student learning. This report describes the primary components of the state educational policy-making apparatus, outlines some of the challenges and issues confronting those components, and is designed to offer guidance to efforts to increase the capacity of states to provide leadership for student learning.

Politics and Players: *Statutory Diversity*

The chronic lack of capacity that bedevils states as they struggle to install sensible standards and somehow make public education genuinely accountable is made even more acute by the statutory hodgepodge of politics, role-players, responsibilities, and bureaucracies that exemplify the policy-making "system" in most states. In *ECS StateNotes/Governance* of March 2000, the Education Commission of the States, which tracks patterns and trends in this thicket, defines four governance models plus ten deviations—none of which make life easy for reform-minded elements in the states.

Briefly, Model One embraces the 13 states in which the governor appoints the state board of education, which in turn appoints the chief state school officer (CSSO); Model Two covers the eight where the state board is elected and appoints the CSSO; the 11-state Model Three features the governor appointing the state board and the public electing the CSSO; and Model Four, numbering eight states, has the governor appointing both the state boards and the CSSO. Typical of the variety of the rest and embodying various permutations and combinations of all four are South Carolina, where the legislature appoints 16 board members, the governor one, and the chief state school officer is elected, and New York, where the state legislature (one of the most contentious in the country) appoints the board, which appoints the CSSO. The single most stable feature of this crazy quilt pattern of state governance in education is that no one can appoint the governor or legislature; they are elected and presumably always will be.

Achieving uniformity among states is a patently impossible dream. That does not mean, however, that individual states cannot learn from others or that individual systems of state governance cannot be improved from within. As matters stand in 2001, here is how all but one of the key components, as well as a couple of materially involved "outsiders," seem to stack up. (The unique role of the 50 CSSOs and their state education agencies is considered separately in the report's next section.)

50 Governors

One of the prevailing assumptions, whether valid or not, about present-day educational leadership in America is that the nation has 50 "education governors." Whatever their other priorities or preoccupations may be—and whether Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, veteran governor or first-term rookie, long-time education activist or recent convert—few governors miss any opportunity to trumpet their unshakable intention of making their states living models of how dedicated governors can deliver the goods.

The once-unlikely truth is that they are mostly right. Some governors are doubtless doing a better job in education than others, but all are very much engaged. Most use the gubernatorial pulpit to good advantage to tout their vision of school reform. Most are willing to fight for, or at least accept, increased budgets for education. Just as presidents invoke bipartisanship at times of foreign relations crises, governors can declare education to be a nonpartisan issue transcending presumably petty political differences. What, after all, could be more important than a proper education for the state's most precious asset, its children?

The early years of the 21st century may in fact be a time of the governors. The headline of a column by David Broder in *The Washington Post* of February 28, 2001, read "Governors on a Roll," and the distinguished political columnist went on to describe governors attending a Washington meeting of the National Governors Association as being "in the Promised Land" in a country whose president, a former governor like two of his three most recent predecessors, is clearly bent on augmenting state responsibility wherever possible. This image is reinforced by other clear signs: a U.S.

Senate with 15 former governors and three more in the Cabinet, the fact that former governors have inhabited the White House for 21 of the past 25 years, Supreme Court decisions curbing congressional authority to mandate state actions, and the clear opportunity for well-prepared governors to take advantage of the absence of solid party majorities in either house of Congress.

As they seek to consolidate their power, today's governors, 29 of them Republicans and thus predisposed to cooperate with the Bush administration, have a rare shot at transforming rhetoric into deed. As recently as the 1980s, only a few, such as Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, William Clinton of Arkansas, James Hunt of North Carolina, and Richard Riley of South Carolina were fluent in the issues and taking concrete measures to improve their states' performance. Now, however, many have forced themselves to become deeply knowledgeable and are using the leverage they possess in appointments, working with legislative majorities, and simply exercising political clout to deliver better educational services in their states. Although statutory authority may sometimes be shared, it is the unmatched influence and extraordinary ability to lead and cause things to happen that gives governors the ultimate word in state education policy and deed, and it is to governors, therefore, that the others must inevitably turn when crucial decisions and support are needed.

As the governors have become more proactively engaged in school issues, their education aides increasingly have emerged as major forces in the policy-shaping process in many states. These aides, like everyone else in education, have their own organization (Governors Education Policy Aides) and, in numerous cases, have preempted the chiefs, state board members, and legislators as influential determiners of state policy. Although the aides are frequently young and inexperienced in education matters, they are politically astute and have direct access to governors. Their influence cannot be underestimated and is growing in a significant number of states.

7,400-Plus Legislators

To understate the obvious, the over 7,400 elected officials who comprise the nation's 50 state legislatures are a remarkable cross-section of American society. Commenting on state legislatures, the legislative scholar Alan Rosenthal of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University told *The Washington Post*'s Daniel LeDuc, "The fact is, (legislatures) don't agree on much beyond better education and motherhood. This is where those disagreements are represented. It's messy, it's disorderly, it's unpredictable, it's democracy." Despite this observation, state legislatures don't always agree about education either.

Nobody ever pretended that democracy in action is tidy, that it guarantees quality or equality, or that its deliberations necessarily mirror the innate common sense of most electorates. On their good days, state legislatures, which are often exemplars of diversity, can be stimulating and creative antidotes to immobile bureaucracies, ideology-driven governors, or narrowly-focused state education boards. And while there are many enlightened and effective legislators among the states, too many are also capable of counterproductive nit-picking, a willful disregard of hard facts, an unwillingness to take any significant level of ownership of key issues, and an occasional tendency to look downright foolish. Yet thoroughly enlightened leadership comes from countless individual legislators like Gary Hart in California in the 1980s and West Virginia state senator Lloyd Jackson, who chairs the education committee and has been one of his state's genuine leaders in pushing for comprehensive school reform.

As a key elected voice in state policy-making, legislatures clearly have much to say about and a lot to do with shaping their states' mandates on education. While debate may be strenuous and highly partisan, even when the governor's party is firmly in control of the legislature, it ordinarily tends toward the bipartisan on education matters.

However, state policy that promulgates state standards for student performance, state assessments, or even some significant consequences for students or districts may actually result from ac-

tions taken by policymakers other than legislators. In addition, state policymakers, including legislators, often do not adequately consider available information based on research and experience that tells us much about "what works" to improve school and student performance. Task Force Co-Chair Ron Cowell noted that as a consequence there is sometimes no legislative sense of "ownership" of the policies or an understanding of an obligation to build school, district, and departmental educational capacity to make sure standards really work.

Our elected state legislators nevertheless stand alone as the most representative group in every state to deal with the larger concerns and interests of its citizens. As in any profession, how well they do their job hinges to a large extent on conditions in the workplace. And here we find unevenness elevated to a force unto itself. Salaries are wildly disparate, ranging from $200 per two-year term and no allowance for daily expenses in New Hampshire to $99,000 annually plus $121 per diem (when the legislature is in session) in California, where being a state legislator can be a full-time career and a stepping-stone to higher office. New Hampshire also boasts the largest lower house with 400 members, while Alaska, Delaware, and Nevada bring up the rear with 40, 41, and 42, respectively. With 67 members, Minnesota has the largest state senate, and, again, Alaska (20), Delaware (21), and Nevada (21) are in a nearly dead heat for smallest.

Taking a somewhat different tack, William Pound, executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), opined in the summer 1999 issue of the NCSL magazine, *State Legislatures* (as quoted by Chris Pipho in the December 1999 *Phi Delta Kappan*), that there were three identifiable categories of legislatures: 1) "professionalized" ones typical of large-population states such as California, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and New Jersey, where pay is higher, the duration of sessions is not fixed, there are large professional staffs, and, as Pipho put it, members "define their occupation as legislator"; 2) a "transitional" category of states that have some of the qualities of the "professionalized" legislatures and some of the more conventional citizen legislatures; and 3) the roughly 15 "traditional" bodies, mostly in New England and the Midwest and West, that limit the duration of their sessions, have higher turnover rates, and whose members do not view themselves primarily as legislators,

To these three, Pound adds a possible fourth category: legislatures with term limits for members, a total of 18, some of whom are also numbered in the original three categories. The larger implications of term limits for public education are mixed but potentially substantial. It is no secret that, like campaign finance reform, it has built-in pitfalls that may negate or outweigh its benefits. In theory, injecting new legislators into the law-making stream should be a welcome move, but it makes more imperative efforts to prepare or train legislators to become education leaders.

508 State Board Members

Stability, a highly desirable quality in policy-oriented bodies, is not among the more prominent characteristics of most state boards of education, as the data below suggest.

In *NASBE State Profiles*, a January 2001 compilation by the National Association of State Boards of Education, we learn, among other relatively unknown facts about boards, that 1) Minnesota and Wisconsin do not have state boards; 2) including the District of Columbia's nine members, student members, and the governor of Alabama, there are only 508 state board members nationwide; 3)state boards vary in size from seven to 19 members with terms ranging from four to nine years; 4) 48 boards have a "unique feature," and 38 merit "special notes"; and 5) they get their jobs in such diverse ways as statewide elections and partisan and nonpartisan ballots, appointment by the governor or state legislature, or various combinations of these and others. The state boards also appoint chief state school officers in 25 states (with the governor's approval in two), a responsibility that pro-

foundly affects how or even whether those states can make appreciable progress in helping to advance student learning.

While generalizations about the responsibilities of state boards can be misleading, and their dissimilarities seem to outweigh their commonalities, certain specific legal powers are common to most. These, according to a 1993 report produced at Indiana University and published by the Education Commission of the States, are traditionally in such areas as standards, certification, and accreditation of teachers and administrators; graduation requirements; testing and assessment programs (a current fixation of governors and legislatures); reviewing state education agency budgets; and the preparation of rules and regulations for state education programs. Except in Maine, chief state school officers participate in board work in various roles ranging from *ex officio* member to chairman or chief executive officer. In practice, most of the staff work of boards is done by the state education agency.

State boards will not be mistaken for star actors in most of the 48 states that have them. With some exceptions, they do not generate the kind of respect that legislatures do, nor do all but a few have anything like their influence. But they should not be underrated. Boards are, on the whole, populated by responsible lay leaders who can—and should be—important advocates for education in the state. Indeed, some analysts credit state education boards with sparking the movement toward standards that dominates contemporary reform. As a capable and energetic board chair such as Christopher Cross, a Republican in Maryland in the 1990s, demonstrates, someone who knows the system inside out and has informed ideas about excellent schools and educated students can through sheer competence and political savvy become one of a state's principal policy-making assets. Leadership by a board can also be evident when, as in Pennsylvania and possibly elsewhere, governors and legislators may not know as much about complex issues (such as standards and assessments) as do members of the board.

The Business Factor

Any impression that business interests were passive bystanders in state-level school reform became moot nearly 20 years ago when the redoubtable H. Ross Perot left his brand on public education in Texas. As head of a prestigious commission charged by the governor with examining every aspect of the state's operations and performance in education, the then largely unknown future presidential candidate capitalized handsomely on public concerns raised by the Reagan Administration's disturbing *A Nation at Risk* and a growing sense that the state's schools were not up to preparing workers for jobs with the companies that were to move there in the then-imminent high-tech era.

Perot's report, covering everything from a call for full-day kindergarten to "no pass, no play" restrictions on high school athletes, was a proverbial barnburner for the times, both for what it said (little of it positive) and for legitimating the role of corporate leaders in hitherto unexplored territory. It became a starting point for school reform, respected by leaders of both parties and a precursor of things to come in Texas and elsewhere.

Business interests have stayed profoundly involved in Texas, and their participation in education reform is now taken for granted, although some doubters persist in describing their motivation as more inner-directed than benevolent. The charge is probably unjustified because the Perot Commission, its various business-oriented successors in Texas, and most emulators elsewhere have made no bones about what they viewed as the larger economic purposes of their interventions. But even if their promotion of reform does have a corporate bent, the fact is that many larger educational blessings flow even from reform with a business slant, conspicuously so in a state such as Texas, where

upping system-wide academic achievement had never been an overriding priority. Also, no one could accuse the Texas reformers of ignorance of the basic components of successful reform. Economically-oriented though they may have been, the Perot team was comprised of "business leaders who became heavily involved with learning the issues of education and sustained their involvement for over a decade," according to *Exploring Rapid Achievement Gains in North Carolina and Texas*, a 1998 publication of the Washington, D.C.-based National Education Goals Panel (NEGP). By all accounts, their contributions were founded on generally sound educational principles.

The issue of pro-business bias nonetheless persists, even in Texas, where the Perot Commission's recommendations for statewide testing, a tougher high school curriculum, and even a tax increase to fund their recommendations gained legislative approval—the tax measure achieving it in a special session. Known as "Senate One," the legislation gave the State Board of Education one year to realign all state education policies and rules with the new legislation. But provisions for accountability were strongly influenced by business, with a subsequent strategic plan reflecting what the NEGP called "a business philosophy of establishing accountability in the school system."

In state after state, though, corporate leaders have become important players in education reform, and governors and state officials have been grateful for their participation. Their imprint is noteworthy in such states as North Carolina, Massachusetts, Oregon, Maryland, and Kentucky, where much of the impetus for reform has come from influential business leaders, groups of them, and such potent organizations as the Business Roundtable, among others.

Support from business is not automatic; it often has to be solicited. Moreover, few self-respecting corporate leaders will involve themselves or their colleagues and firms unless there is a generally agreed vision of what schools should do, basic goals are in place, and there is some guarantee of continuity after their departure. They must also be prepared to deal with what has happened before their arrival. Once the corporate reformers are on board, life for state leaders can become very difficult, as bosses in business tend to be highly critical of government, both in the abstract and at the site.

But the advantages of having these folks ready to help out can be tremendous. The right ones know how to use the leverage and influence their status carries with it as they push a reform agenda. Applied wisely by state officials (of whom usually only the governor even begins to impress the business leaders, except in states such as Texas, where the lieutenant governor or House speaker can be almost as powerful), their ability to cut straight to the heart of an issue unencumbered by protocols or chain-of-command sensitivities can be a significant factor in buttressing a state's capacity, particularly in tackling school finance and related issues.

As IEL's *Business Leaders and Communities: Working Together for Change* (1999) points out, these are not the only ways business can become part of reform. Although corporate chiefs rarely run for local, state, or any political office, most boards and legislatures number a significant percentage of bankers, lawyers, owners of small and medium-sized businesses, and professionals of various kinds in their ranks. These fields are their livelihoods, but their managerial and other relevant talents are too often underused by the public bodies on which they serve. Qualifications such as theirs should not be ignored.

The South Carolina Business-Education Subcommittee

"This is a joint subcommittee of two large blue-ribbon committees which were active in promoting the 1984 Education Improvement Act (EIA). EIA authorized the Subcommittee and charged it with reviewing program regulations to assure conformity to EIA; reviewing evaluations and assessments of progress produced by the state agency and other oversight bodies; and making recommendations for the future. Recommendations are to encompass educational needs in the state and current reform policies needing updating.

"The 20-member Subcommittee (10 civic/business members; 6 educators and 4 legislators, by statute) has a small staff and appropriation. It produces an annual report evaluating EIA progress and widely distributes shorter updates. The reports draw on other monitoring and evaluation activities as well as the Subcommittee's own sense of issues requiring attention, needs for fine-tuning and recommendations for improvement."

Source: Fuhrman, S. (1994, April). Politics and systemic education reform. *CPRE Policy Briefs, RB-12.* New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Available at http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/rb12.pdf

The Media Factor

Greatly undervalued by state entities as a potentially crucial influence in deliberations and actions on education, print and electronic media often position themselves as the "x factor," a large but unpredictable presence that can help generate or utterly destroy support for a given issue or larger policy. This kind of "secondary leadership" is usually exercised by local newspaper, radio, and television outlets, which carry far more news and analysis of educational issues than do such national newspapers as *The New York Times, USA TODAY, The Wall Street Journal,* and *The Washington Post,* and the principal broadcast and cable networks. Although traditionally education reporters were usually younger and less experienced than their colleagues on other beats, the education assignment has acquired a measure of prestige and desirability over the past 15 or so years in some quarters, and some of the mass media's best professionals are finding it an attractive assignment.

Smart governors, state legislators, board members, and chiefs cultivate and maintain decent relationships with education beat reporters, feeding them background information as well as breaking news and hoping for favorable or at least objective coverage in return. Interestingly, the public claims to be less dependent on the media for news on education than they may actually be, maintaining that sources such as students (their own children), PTA leaders, local educators, and political representatives are better focused and more conversant with the issues than are newspapers, TV, and the Internet. Media-bashing is endemic in many states and localities, and it is fashionable to criticize or even blame reporters for slanted reporting, especially when it appears to have an ideological or philosophical cast. Scratch the surface, though, and most people will admit that they do indeed get a lot of their information about the schools from the media and that most of it seems accurate.

In the capitals, where legislatures are typically in session for only a few months of the year, reporters spend most of their time covering the governor's education-slanted actions and meetings as well as the deliberations of the state board. The more intrepid reporters usually develop and cultivate good, if sometimes *sub rosa,* contacts within the state education bureaucracy, with legislative aides and with the small staffs that look after the state board's affairs between meetings. In the executive branch, some governors prefer that information come from their own public relations sources or from the chief state school officer—and not from the latter's subordinates—and place ostensibly tight restrictions on contacts between education agency functionaries and the media. This is normally a futile exercise because state government is known as an uncontrollable sieve, and an "everybody does it" mentality seems to guide most supposedly "unauthorized" relationships.

In sum, then, governors, state legislatures, state boards of education, business and the media have powerful resources which can be brought to bear on the challenge to support teaching and learning. The system in place is messy, however, as is democracy in action. There is also tension between the vision of reform, the coherent orchestration of resources, and the competitiveness within the system to achieve that vision. Each of the players has a role in maintaining the central focus of state policy and service delivery on teaching and learning while supporting high standards and accountability.

State Education Agencies: *Pivotal Players*

Judged by most plausible criteria, state education agencies (SEAs) are the designated heavy lifters when it comes to doing most of what states actually do rather than talk about in education. They are every state's principal human and organizational resource for shaping the policies (and laws, administrative orders, and other dictates) that governors, legislatures, and boards produce into deliverable high-quality educational services for the state's students and schools. Lamentably, few kind words are written or spoken in support of these largely anonymous agencies and the hierarchies of career civil servants who comprise them. Yet, whether esteemed or not, they are the vital links connecting districts and schools to the main resources and guidance they receive from non-local sources.

For a century or more preceding enactment of the landmark federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, state agencies were the acknowledged focal point of the state's stake in public education. Since then, their fortunes have been on a zigzag course. After 1965 they prospered with the arrival of billions of federal dollars, some of which underwrote as much as 80 percent of SEA payrolls (now down to 47 percent), for roughly 15 years. By the early 1980s, however, their status had fallen dramatically as a weakened economy and a general tightening of budgetary belts took their toll on nearly all state agencies. Then, when comprehensive school reform, prodded by *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, began to take hold as a guiding principle in the mid-1980s, governors, legislatures, boards, business interests, and the mass media asserted stronger roles in state education policy, often at the expense of SEAs. But a decade later, SEAs were back on the map as the insistent political clamor for standards-based change and across-the-board accountability loomed as their central concerns.

Since reaching their high-water mark of influence from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, however, the overall trajectory of the SEAs' continuing struggle for status and respect has been downward. In the words of Task Force Co-Chair John MacDonald, a former chief state school officer, "SEAs have been marginalized as everyone else gets into the game." So pronounced has been the overall slide of the state agencies, as well as the disrespect that has accompanied it, that some analysts of education governance have taken to labeling them as the weakest link in the system.

Today, state education agencies are now almost too lean. Reduced budgets starting in the 1980s stripped them of their capacity to fill many vacancies, much less expand to meet new demands. Too, salary levels have stayed low when compared to those of employees holding comparable positions in federal and many municipal agencies, including school district headquarters. Even when SEA jobs are available, qualified experts and managers customarily find the prospects elsewhere to be more appealing. A culture favoring small government has also taken over many capitals, where it is also fashionable to proclaim that having appropriately-sized state departments of education somehow violates the "theology of local control."

As in most organizations and professions, especially those ceaselessly exposed to public and media scrutiny, the travails of state agencies start at the top. Undoubtedly, some state education chiefs, commissioners, and superintendents (titles differ, but responsibilities are essentially the same across the country) have not been up to the job. Many other chiefs are admirably qualified leaders, educators, and administrators dedicated to improving the quality of education in their states—even when the deck is stacked against them. But whatever their professional origins may be, one thing is certain: Their annual salaries, which are usually in the low to mid-$100,000s, do not approach those of foundation heads, many college presidents and administrators, or directors of professional associations, many of whom perform less arduous and essential work than do the chiefs. (And it cannot be

gratifying to know that chiefs do not usually earn as much as most urban or even some suburban superintendents in their own states.)

Is There a Pipeline Problem?

Numerous sources cite salary as a significant barrier to recruiting and retaining leaders for teaching positions, principalships, and district superintendencies. Is the same situation true for chief state school officers? A look at the numbers may provide a clue.

The salary range for governors in 2001 was $65,000 to $157,143 and for chief state school officers between $67,273 and $192,511 (with bonuses). Compare these figures to some typical salaries in the non-profit world: In 1999 the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City received $483,479 in salary and an additional $148,111 for expenses. The president of the New York Public Library earned $227,000 plus a housing allowance of $115,000. The head of the AARP got $369,000 plus retirement benefits of $141,806. In the 1998–99 academic year the president of the University of Pennsylvania drew $603,165.

This could cause talented young people with a bent toward politics, education, or both to weigh the money, prestige and responsibilities of top state positions and wonder about entering public service. The leadership challenge for the states will be to create more incentives to attract quality people to these critically important positions.

Sources: National Governors Association. Council of Chief State School Officers. Barnes, J. (2001, April 1). Executive pay: A special report; It's a good living, but not like industry. *The New York Times*. Available at http://www.nytimes.com

Relatively few minority group members have been appointed or elected chiefs even though the demographics of student populations would seem to dictate that they be far more heavily represented. Turnover, which included half of the country's chiefs in 1996 alone, is a constant worry, as is the widely perceived drop in quality, even among well-credentialed aspirants. High-order political skills are a non-negotiable must for today's state education commissioners, sometimes at the cost of energies that they may instinctively feel should be more oriented toward educational matters. Nancy Grasmick, with nearly ten years as Maryland's state superintendent of schools, poses a stark contrast to the high turnover of chief state school officers in other states. She has demonstrated that collaboration and partnerships with government, business, foundations, higher education, and community organizations result in greater stability in leadership, innovative education solutions, and a comprehensive approach to school reform.

With national attention focused laser-like on public education, chief state school officers must continuously hone their skills as advocates, financial experts, and deal-cutters in addition to those of educators and administrators. Always attentive to what is happening in local school districts, they must also be well-versed in the vagaries of federal education policy and practice. This need will almost certainly acquire greater urgency in the administration of President George W. Bush, a former governor, whose intention to expand the federal education budget but give states greatly increased latitude in spending their considerable share will place far heavier (but not necessarily unwelcome) burdens on chiefs and their education departments.

Though laboriously and precisely described in statutes, mission statements, and a variety of other places, the real-life responsibilities of chiefs and their agencies seem to be in a constant state of flux. Although some "lighthouse states" were years ahead of the rest, monitoring and service, the "traditional" SEA jobs, clearly became subordinate to technical assistance for education reform in the early 1990s. This shift from input to an enabling technical assistance role was difficult for many states that

lacked the necessary resources, capacity, and knowledge. Add the ramifications of the widely backed movement toward standards and accountability, the central feature of early 21st century reform, and state agencies may soon be overwhelmed. Having reduced staff in their once-important instructional divisions—conspicuously so in curriculum development, science, and mathematics—they have widened the already perilous mismatch between expectations and the capacity to drive standards. Political pressure will be unusually heavy if they do not demonstrate the capability to close or narrow this gap.

A short but illuminating 1994 monograph by Jack MacDonald then of the Council of Chief State School Officers for the National Governors Association called *The Transformation of State Departments of Education in Support of Systemic Reforms* underlines the challenges SEAs are having in adapting themselves to the imperatives of reform. The evolution from hierarchical structures of separate sub-organizations to more systemic operational modes has been painful in many states. Decentralization can wipe out long-established divisions while recasting professional responsibilities, sometimes ruthlessly. Functioning in teams operating in an interdepartmental fashion, often with workers from the states' health and welfare departments, is not just a significant change for SEA professional careerists; it can also be a disturbing, potentially career-threatening experience. Too often SEA employees (and those of other state agencies as well) define their work in terms of the programs they manage, rather than how those programs contribute to a strategy that improves student learning.

Among the states that seem to have weathered, indeed, prospered through this ordeal, North Carolina and Texas stand out for several reasons. Both have had legitimate "education governors" of both parties who have not hesitated to come to grips with the basic issues of reform of the past 15 years, North Carolina perhaps more gradually. They have reorganized and decentralized SEAs to reflect new priorities, whatever their origins: America 2000 of the Bush Senior administration, the Clinton administration's Goals 2000, the twin movements of standards and accountability, or locally mandated special needs. They were also among the earliest to develop, adopt, and maintain statewide learning standards. Both have treated "infrastructure," which so many other states consider to consist only of state education agencies, as also encompassing what the 1998 report of the National Education Goals Panel called "the more visible organizations that have been created and jointly funded through the public and private sectors and . . . a mix of public, nonprofit, and private sector participants and organizations."

How Two States Succeeded

"North Carolina and Texas posted the largest average gains in student scores on the tests of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered from 1990 to 1997. These results are mirrored in state assessments administered during the same period, and there is evidence of the scores of disadvantaged students improving more rapidly that those of advantaged students.

"Nor does it seem that several factors commonly associated with student achievement–real per pupil spending, teacher/pupil ratios, teachers with advanced degrees, and experience levels of teachers–explain the test score gains. Texas and North Carolina rank at or below national averages on these characteristics and none of them changed during the period under study in ways that would explain the gains.

"The study concludes that the most plausible explanation for the test score gains are found in the policy environment established in each state. Both states each pursued remarkably similar paths, and each succeeded in changing the organizational environment and incentive structure for educators in ways that led to improvement. The keys to this change include: creating an aligned system of standards, curriculum, and assessments; holding schools accountable for improvement by all students; and critical support from business in developing, implementing, and sustaining these changes over time."

Source: Grissmer, D. & Flanagan, A. (1998, November). *Exploring rapid achievement gains in North Carolina and Texas.* Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel. Available at http://www.negp.gov/reports/grissmer.pdf

On the other side of the ledger, Massachusetts, a state in which ideological schisms have skewed the reform scene, offers a different, less linear kind of experience, according to Dan French of the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston and a veteran of 13 years in that state's Department of Education. Writing in *Phi Delta Kappan* of November 1998, French calls on states to avoid the mistakes made in the Bay State, where the SEA was ordered to make everything else on its agenda secondary to implementing new curriculum frameworks, academic standards, and state assessment tests.

Combining this arbitrary decision-making style with a slavish devotion to the mantra of "one size fits all" standards was a disastrous course which sharply constricted innovation in Massachusetts. Practitioners were excluded from the process of developing education policies that were to affect them. Standards were narrow and overly prescriptive, while high-stakes tests focused on "a narrow range of facts rather than on knowledge and understanding." As a result, wrote French, the conditions that "need to be in place for democratic schools to flourish" were ignored, and the gap between low-income and minority-group students and those of more privileged backgrounds will probably widen rather than narrow very much.

However well they may ultimately represent state government's role in public education, SEAs are likely to receive little positive recognition as they struggle to adapt to far-reaching change. But they can be expected to take the brunt of any critical comment from politicians and the media. Staffed by mostly appointed chiefs and careerist subordinates who obviously lack political power bases, SEAs are likely to remain among the favorite punching bags of critics of all ideological complexions. They are not places for officials with tender psyches; even when they do well, public praise is notably absent.

Nowhere is this more true than in the on-going, tense relationships between state education agencies and urban school systems, which have become exacerbated in recent years. The implications of these strained relationships in the context of today's rapidly changing demographics and increasing demands for accountability are serious and unfortunately result in negative coverage by the media.

The challenge then for state education agency leadership is to develop a responsive structure around a coherent vision of student achievement with the capacity to support teaching and learning at the local level through technical assistance, leadership development, and alignment of standards, assessments, and curriculum as well as internal and external systems.

Issues and Priorities: *An Emerging Consensus*

When asked to identify the highest-priority issues facing state leadership in education, the assembled members of the Task Force on State Leadership—a representative group of respected practitioners, current or former state officials, business leaders, and others—proposed 37 separate items, some of them carefully broken down into five or six additional action-demanding subtopics. A subsequent meeting of the Task Force's Co-Chairs and Initiative staff members reinforced a collective perception that an unwieldy assortment of items, many of them portrayed in stark, even apocalyptic, terms, were—or should be—in play.

A second inescapable conclusion drew almost immediate attention on both occasions: state-level policy-making and implementation in education are typified by often dysfunctional and incompatible relationships, responsibilities, and capabilities. Judging from the *potpourri* of subjects and passionate professional concerns that frequently accompanied discussion of them, it could be inferred that state leadership was messy (some participants used that term) demanding urgent top-level remedial action, probably even a thorough overhaul of the key institutions. It should be noted, however, that educators like orderliness, which politics is not, which contributes to differing expectations.

Out of the mélange of issues and preoccupations that pervaded these sessions there emerged a consensus along these lines:

- **Vision:** Despite fervent pleas on its behalf, the "vision thing" is markedly absent from many state education circles in their debates and actions on education policy. Political campaigns proclaim elevated concepts and make broad promises that too frequently disintegrate when reality intrudes. As representatives of larger publics, state education boards are normally held to be the conceptualizers and mission-formulators, but the current reform era has pushed other actors onto center stage. The increasing emphasis on measuring and assessing student and school achievement sometimes makes them ends in themselves rather than strategic and tactical means to measure the realization of the vision.
- **Capa ity:** As presently constituted, state education agencies are not able to deal promptly and effectively with the demands that are being levied on them by the federal government, their own legislatures, and the public. Although many are strongly committed to developing the necessary competence, they are embarking on a long, slow journey with no guarantees of success. Although some states were light years ahead of others throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the publicized reforms of the 1980s and 1990s left other state education authorities reeling. Usually through no fault of their own, they have been inhibited, even victimized, by inadequate budgets, staffs of uneven (sometimes diminishing) quality, outdated tax structures, indifferent populations, irrational political expectations, and, in many states, badly outdated operational systems. Recodification, finally under way in a few states, can be an arduous and frustrating task.
- **Accountability:** A necessary reality in any self-respecting business, the notion of accountability represents a combination of buzzword, threat, and opportunity in state education circles. Although governors are foursquare behind it at least in theory (even joining with well-known business leaders in Achieve, Inc. to promote standards), many respected state officials and local school leaders see its inherent problems when applied to student and school performance. The fit may prove to be awkward. Creating fair and equitable methods to achieve genuine accountability is far more difficult than its praiseworthy premises would seem to indicate.

- **Standards:** Few states are even modestly prepared to define how standards-based reform will ultimately take shape, much less provide guidance to school districts and their own agencies on its purposes and intricacies. Governors across the nation have pronounced their fervent support of higher academic standards and have called for the installation of a wide selection of systems for measurement. Only one or two states have not boarded the standards express. But mismatches abound, and reconciliation seems far off. The differences among states are marked; some seem genuinely committed to realistic standards, while others may wind up simply going through the motions. And the connection between emerging federal mandates on one hand and the various state arrangements on the other is also fuzzy.
- **Finance:** Although the Task Force devoted only limited attention to school finance as a leadership matter, the subject hovers over any substantive discussion of state-level leadership. Thirty-two states are in various stages of litigation on the issue (some for decades), and emotions are as high as ever in the nation's less-privileged districts. Whether the issue at hand is standards and testing, facilities, small classes, professional development, or any other, the acknowledged fact is that, in many states, per pupil expenditures in schools in upscale districts are still twice as high or more than those in poor urban and rural districts. Failure to narrow these chronic disparities makes a mockery of any pretense of meaningful accountability—or reform.
- **Responsibility:** Too easily overlooked in cataloguing the dilemmas of state leadership is the staggering volume of work state agencies are mandated to perform. As identified in *State Policy & Practice Compendium,* a product of the State Action for Education Leadership Project at the Council of Chief State School Officers, the key areas requiring improvement in 2001 are, in broad terms, strengthening leadership and "ways of doing business"; expanding and improving the leadership pool; education and professional learning; licensure, certification, and program accreditation; conditions of professional practice; and authority for practice and governance structures. Merely meeting the nominal everyday responsibilities under these headings is a formidable task; infusing updated versions of them into the processes of school reform in 50 states could prove to be overpowering.
- **The Federal Role:** Except when federal money comes without restrictions or pays salaries of state employees, states feel little need to pay much attention to or be particularly respectful toward the U.S. Department of Education. Veterans of the state side of the federal-state connection point out that, while Washington's role should be as an enabler, it seems somehow to evolve into that of a boss or competitor or hair-splitting monitor. New federal administrations bring new issues and priorities to the national capital. Inexperience and even arrogance appear at times to be their most striking qualities, even in those headed by former governors, as has been the case in three of the past four administrations. (A huge exception at the cabinet level was President Clinton's Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, a former governor of South Carolina, who drew bipartisan admiration.) Requirements are often levied arbitrarily on states without consultation or regard to their capabilities and well-established policies and practices. In other words, the state-federal relationship is usually less than harmonious and shows few signs of improving even as a new administration calls for more independence for states in dealing with support from Washington. Indeed, any intimation of federal control or even influence is resented by many state and local officials because of the reality that only 7% of the total expenditures on K-12 education is received from federal sources. This 7% figure, however, is higher in many poor districts and can be critical to equity-oriented programs and district services which would not be possible without this funding source.

Challenges and Charges

Given the heterogeneity of educational governance systems and supporting structures in the states, the Task Force recognized from the start that it would be presumptuous to suggest prescriptions for improving educational leadership to 50 state governors, legislatures, boards, chiefs, and state education agencies. Each state has its own set of challenges, initiatives, and success stories. Yet, the Task Force did identify key issues and principles as generally relevant to state leadership in education in all 50 states. Some of these issues and principles are as old as state government itself; others are as new as the standards movement. From Task Force discussions and relevant literature there emerged these issues and charges:

Preparing Better Leaders

Often omitted or tossed in as an afterthought in discussions of education policy, the development of trained leaders for state government deserves a much higher place on state agendas (and in their budgets) than is now the case. The "professionalization" of state leadership as a discipline within education leadership and other leadership issues bear investigating, but unhappily, leadership development is frequently nonexistent or axed as an early casualty of budget-trimming. National membership associations such as the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the Council of Chief State School Officers tend to run their own abbreviated programs, often in the form of one- or two-day policy seminars at their national conventions or elsewhere. But there usually is little sustainability or follow-up, and whatever is learned is too quickly brushed aside when "trainees" return home to real world issues in state capitals.

This type of leadership training, if it can be called that, misses an essential point. Instead of promoting common understanding and shared purpose among senior elected, appointed, and career officials from across the policy-making spectrum, it tends to perpetuate the *de facto* segregation of role groups from each other, thus leading to skewed levels of knowledge and perception about other elements of the state policy system. Sporadic efforts to overcome this and other shortcomings in leadership training have encountered limited success. Cross-group executive leadership training in education is not a new idea; financing has occasionally materialized for it, but it has almost never been sustained. North Carolina, where some 50 professional development programs were eradicated and revamped, furnishes perhaps the best example to date of achieving a unified approach to professional development at the state level in education. (A really useful departure would be cross-agency training that also included some senior local education officials.)

As a high and early priority, a major foundation or corporation or consortia of them, preferably not including or financed by the federal government, could be created to generate the necessary interest and long-range commitment. A very recent, major grant by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to a newly created consortium of major state-based organizations (CCSSO, NASBE, NGA, NCSL, and ECS) represents an important step in this direction. As a first step, it might ask nationally respected experts in leadership development to recommend how best to meet this vital need. There are many models of executive or leadership training and no shortage of experts to sort them out. At a minimum, any such program should: 1) have the full support, including an ironclad long-term financial commitment, of the parent bodies of all potential participants; 2) include representatives of all parties involved in education policy; 3) take as much time as necessary to explore issues and processes in depth; 4) expose participants to unorthodox as well as mainstream thinking; 5) require fol-

low-up activities; and 6) be substantive in content but also emphasize process, particularly as it evolves in the information age.

Among the more successful models of inter-agency leadership development at the national level that merit close study are 1) the National War College and the National Defense University/Industrial College of the Armed Forces, which bring together senior officers (colonels and naval captains—tomorrow's generals and admirals) of all four military services in addition to civilians of comparable rank from national security-oriented agencies, and 2) the State Department's Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy, also populated by leaders from numerous agencies and the military. Both feature extensive exposure to corporate activities, unconventional thinking and institutions, and the development of national policy. Never to be underestimated, too, is the positive effect such "togetherness" can have on building informal but very useful networks of future top echelon leaders. An international example of cross-agency training can be found at the Australian Academy for Senior Leaders that serves both military and civil officials, including educators.

Bipartisanship and Coalitions

It belabors the obvious to reiterate that the education of its children is a state's and therefore a governor's most solemn public obligation and that political bipartisanship and citizen involvement can be invaluable catalysts in making good on that commitment. Their absence can be destructive. While easier said than done, political decision-makers can—and must—assert their collective recognition of these truisms as building blocks of sensible policy.

States that have brought into advisory roles such informed "outsiders" as business leaders, scientists, civic activists, lawyers, and others have been among the country's more successful school reformers. (See boxes on Kentucky's Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and the South Carolina Business-Education Subcommittee.) Governors have a crucial responsibility to bring such people together to help make things happen. Such coalitions should not be peopled by cronies or political allies content to rubber stamp campaign promises or to help a new governor discard what may already work. They must be active, respected, knowledgeable citizens deeply committed to improving education in their states. "Letterhead names" have only limited value. And where public education is concerned, political loyalty should be a non-factor.

The Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence

"This is a non-profit, volunteer group composed of 95 private citizens, including former governors, business leaders, civic activists, parents and professionals. Membership is not open to statewide elected officeholders or candidates or professional educators (except K-12 classroom teachers).

"Pritchard began as a governmental committee charged with studying the longterm needs of postsecondary education. In 1983 it became a private, nonprofit organization and turned its focus to K-12 education. It developed reform recommendations, publishing major reports demonstrating the need for reform, arguing for coordinated reform policies and suggesting specific reform approaches; organized citizen and business support; and assisted the legal and political processes that spawned the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA).

"Currently, the Committee monitors and supports reform implementation. With funding from corporations and foundations and a staff of 17 people, the Committee is pursuing the following activities:

- Informing the general public about provisions of the reform act and its implementation through summaries, reports, the media, primers, training of local affiliates and the like.
- Enlisting, training and supporting citizens through Community Committees on Educational Reform. Community Committees in each district are intended to inform the public, recruit and train school site council candidates, develop local leadership and monitor local implementation progress.
- Promoting and supporting parent participation in school-based decision making through training and information.
- Monitoring, evaluating, and reporting state progress on KERA. Activities include training Committee members and other affiliates for monitoring tasks, creating a state-level checklist of implementation activities, publicizing open meetings, and supporting and disseminating studies of reform. Prichard plans annual reports to the state on implementation progress.
- Reporting to the nation on KERA progress, through dissemination and media relations."

Source: Fuhrman, S. (1994, April). Politics and systemic education reform. *CPRE Policy Briefs, RB-12.* New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. Available at http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/rb12.pdf

On the Standards Express

There is little doubt that the era of standards for student learning has arrived and has become the centerpiece of the reform movement. The change in the nature of law-making precipitated by the standards movement has been significant as laws now tend toward prescription of results rather than prescription of process or program. Politicians, distinguished educators, business leaders, the mass media, and assorted commentators from across most of the ideological spectrum appear virtually united in their often highly vocal support. Representative of the support of respected scholars is an article in the April 2000 issue of *Basic Education* by Paul Hill of the University of Washington and the Brookings Institution calling on states to subordinate much of their traditional responsibility in education to "an overarching commitment to standards and school performance accountability." The issue is not whether to base reform designs on standards but how to prepare states to install and run them.

New Kinds of State Commitment

"In politics, states will have to find ways of stabilizing the rules environment so that schools will be able to work on problems of student achievement rather than constantly adapting to new statewide initiatives. The political entrepreneurship that leads to shifting mandates, such as replacing phonics with whole language or vice-versa, or mandating class size reductions, needs to be disciplined by an overarching commitment to standards and school performance accountability. No one can outlaw politics, but governors and business leaders can discipline it by continually asserting the commitment of states to standards-based reform and resisting contrary initiatives.

"In policy, states will have to find ways to increase schools' freedom of action, so that schools can not only develop but also implement strategies for helping students meet standards. This most certainly will include eliminating rules that constrain schools' days and hours of operation, require expensive administrative structures, and force schools to employ teachers who do not or will not contribute to an improvement strategy. States also need to consolidate teacher professional development funds at the school level so that schools under performance pressure can buy what they need rather than begging help from overtaxed district central offices. These changes will not be easy to make, but states are already being forced toward them by administrators and teachers who assert that responsibility for results implies freedom to act."

Source: Hill, P. (2000, April). The changing state role. *Basic Education.* Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education.

Dissent has been muted and by and large ineffectual, even though some credible scholars and analysts of public education have cautioned policy-setters to take a very hard look—and tap the best expert assistance—before boarding this bandwagon. Even such a devout supporter of standards as Hill concedes that " . . . many states are virtually clueless about how to operate in this new environment. Most states have had difficulty grasping their new roles at the very front end of standards-based reform."

As states install their various versions of standards and accountability, it would be prudent for state leaders to 1) give some weight to the views and research findings of credible critics, especially those with a long-range view; 2) recognize the necessity for all state officials from governors to state agency careerists to examine carefully all of the implications of standards for their state with its set of unique qualities (which are identical to no others); and 3) recall that radio and television were once supposedly ordained to dominate classroom instruction and that the bull markets of the late 1990s were presumably locked in as fixtures in American life. A healthy skepticism should greet all such forecasts, including those on the long-term prospects of the standards movement.

The first generation of standards and assessment has taught us a great deal about developing challenging academic programs and meaningful, fair assessments aligned with standards and curriculum. State policy and decision-makers must now take a leadership role in implementing what we have learned—that quick fixes do not achieve the vision and that a systemic approach is needed.

Free Advice for the Powerful

Governors:

- Build on what exists. Stamping a name on something new helps no one, probably not even the governor. Nor does jumping from one thing to another, which creates an impression of unnecessary segmentation. Consistency, if it can be achieved, is infinitely more worthwhile for everyone concerned, especially the students, and more likely to sustain effective reforms.
- Try to transcend politics in framing basic issues.

- Use your authority to bring people together to help create a cohesive, comprehensive set of state policies. Capitalize on the fact that the support base for public education is broad.
- Nurture champions from outside the education enterprise who will help to nourish reform.
- Get advice from more than one source. Select education advisors and chiefs (where not elected) with great deliberation.

Legislators:

- Hire the best possible professional staff and support them fully—this is essential if legislators are to do their jobs while confronting turnover, short sessions, and term limits.
- Promote interdisciplinary and joint committee work to get a better perspective on state education issues. Advocate the same for state government, and encourage state government to break down barriers between departments.
- Look seriously into how non-academic services and supports from other agencies can support improved student learning. Legislatures can catalyze this kind of cross-agency work perhaps better than any other body (although educators do not always favor it and must be brought along carefully).
- Use, but don't abuse, the power to convene agency heads and outside experts whether the governor approves and participates or not.
- Consider making chairmanships of education committees the only committee responsibility of the incumbent so that he/she may master education issues. Education is that important.

State Boards:

- Establish exactly what board members should do and find the best people to do it. Service comes first, but role clarification, especially as between chief state school officers and boards, is fundamental.
- Whether elected or appointed, develop processes that will ensure strong performance.
- Delineate the authority of the board's chief executive, if there is one, with the care it deserves.
- Be more ready to assume a role of lay leadership; boards are theoretically (sometimes actually) responsible for guidance, advocacy, and public support of the states' education enterprises. Ensure that the voice of communities is heard in state public education policy making.

State Education Agencies:

- Develop a policy framework, together with other state agencies, to guide funding and implementation of all programs and services that are intended to support student learning or outcomes that research suggests are closely related to learning. (See box on Missouri Family And Community Trust.)
- Create an organizational focus inside the state department of education for all programs including those providing primarily non-academic supports to students and their families: after-school programs, coordinated health services, family support services, community school programs, and others.
- Define strategies to help educators work with communities to support better achievement for all students.
- Investigate 1) on-going best practice reviews for all SEAs so that effective practices may be shared, and 2) accreditation services for SEAs to establish a capacity baseline.
- Provide support for leadership development at the state, district, and school levels.

Missouri Family And Community Trust

While many state-organized interagency initiatives are plagued by interdepartmental tensions and turf, they nevertheless represent a promising state policy approach to integrating an array of programs and services related to student learning at the school and community levels. Among the most significant, particularly in light of the public and private sector representation on its board, is the Missouri Family And Community Trust.

FACT (formerly the Missouri Family Investment Trust) was created by Governor Carnahan through Executive Order in 1993. It is a state level, public-private partnership whose purpose is to change how communities and state government work together to improve results for families and children. Its Board of Directors includes representatives from eight state agencies (elementary and secondary education, social services, health, mental health, labor and industrial relations, economic development, corrections, and public safety) and eight private members (leaders of business, higher education, philanthropy, and civic organizations).

FACT's goal is for children to have strong families and communities where parents are working and children are succeeding in school and growing up healthy, safe, and prepared to enter productive adulthood.

Caring Communities, a community school strategy, is one of FACT's signature initiatives. Financed on an interdepartmental basis, Caring Communities provides an array of supports and opportunities intended to improve student learning and well-being, strengthen families, and build healthy communities.

Source: Missouri FACT Web site, www.mofit.org

Business:

- Get involved with developing and supporting the vision for education in your state.
- Use your considerable resources to support state education policy and decision-makers.
- Seek office on the state school board and lobby legislators to support the vision.
- Share your management and leadership experience with educational leaders.

Media:

- Help create the base of support and public will to get involved with education at the state level.
- Develop relationships with state policy and decision-makers to inform objective reporting on the issues.
- Use your considerable influence to educate the public about the importance of state educational leadership and assist citizens in getting actively involved with educational issues.

Eleven Guiding Principles

The Task Force recognizes that state education leadership reflects a diverse collection of values, systems, and often incompatible practices, but suggests that state leaders should be guided by a set of principles that can support more effective leadership:

1) Articulate and honor a vision for the state that includes expectations for all students that are attached to democratically determined, rigorous yet realistic, academic standards.

2) Demand, be thoroughly informed by, and use the best available information concerning current research, best practices, and the most relevant data on all sides of state policy.

3) Provide adequate and equitably distributed resources to state agencies and local districts to ensure that the necessary educational capacity exists at the school, district and state levels to provide every student the opportunity to accomplish the proficiencies expected by the state's student academic standards.

4) Engage all "stakeholders" throughout the process of designing and implementing significant state-level education policy.

5) Invite and develop new relationships on education issues through intergovernmental and interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations.

6) Ensure that state policies affecting public education and children are appropriately aligned, coordinated, complementary, and encourage greater collaboration among K-12 and higher education institutions, including those in the private sector.

7) Establish and fund extraordinary state interventions to assist school districts with high poverty levels and large numbers of low-achieving students.

8) Require, implement, and continuously update systems of measurement and assessment to support the state's vision.

9) Focus on achieving realistic results that will lead to an educated and responsible citizenry as well as an able workforce to ensure prosperity and democracy in the states.

10) Create a system of accountability that holds educators as well as local and state education policy-makers responsible for student achievement and effective schools.

11) Concentrate efforts on addressing leadership pipeline issues such as recruiting, nurturing, training, and preparing new and emerging local and state leaders.

Concluding Comments

The states have always had the legal authority and responsibility for education, but are now explicitly acknowledged as the linchpins of efforts to improve the nation's schools. Today, the states no longer delegate their legal responsibilities to local boards of education in a political ethos supporting minimal state involvement. The pivotal role of state leadership must be more broadly acknowledged and understood by all stakeholders: the general public, the media, and business and political leaders.

State educational leadership is essential, and its importance and needs must become more visible and better understood. We hope that this report contributes to a greater appreciation of this increasingly important but still inadequately understood realm of educational leadership.

Speak Up

To help the Initiative provide the best tools and resources possible for state and regional leadership efforts such as yours, you are invited to contact IEL with news about what is happening in your state:

- What actions do you plan to take to address state leadership issues in your state or region?
- Can you provide examples of effective programs, initiatives, or organizations that might provide useful models for others around the country?
- What additional tools, resources, or information would help you strengthen educational leadership in your state?
- Has this report been useful to you? How?

IEL hopes to incorporate your input in upcoming publications and the Web site of our School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative. Please contact IEL by any of the following means:

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This publication was made possible by grants from:

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education
The Ford Foundation
The UPS Foundation
The Carnegie Corporation of New York
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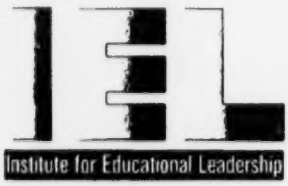

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